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Sources of the Filosofy of the Upaniṣads.—By FRANKLIN EDGERTON, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.

The more I study the Upaniṣads, the more I become imprest with two things:

1. The Upaniṣads as a whole proclaim no filosofical system, nor anything that even remotely resembles a single, unified filosofical system. And:

2. Evry idea containd in at least the older Upaniṣads, with almost no exceptions, is not new to the Upaniṣads, but can be found set forth, or at least *very* clearly foreshadowd, in the older Vedic texts.

Neither of these propositions is new. Probably most occidental scholars would subscribe to both. Yet—to speak of the first proposition first—there is notisable in our standard authorities an almost irresistible tendency to systematize and correlate the things that ar said in the Upaniṣads—things which, as I hold, ar to a very large extent incapable of being systematized and correlated. This tendency appears not only in such Hindu filosofers as Çāmkara, who assumes in advance that the Upaniṣads ar school-texts of the Vedānta filosofy, and, Procrustes-like, makes them fit that pattern, frequently in defiance of the plain meaning of the passages. It is only somewhat less prominent in Deussen, who must needs construct for the Upaniṣads a system centering about the *Bráhman-Ātmán*, interpreted in terms of Schopenhauer. I hav a great admiration for the work of Deussen, which in fact I consider almost the only existing careful and detaild treatment of Upaniṣadic thot which is worthy of serious consideration. But valuable as the work is, it suffers severely from this over-systematization, and especially from the introduction of Schopenhauerian ideas which ar wholly foren to the originals. Among these I am constraind to count Deussen's monstrous (no other word wil suffice) definition of the *original* meaning of the word *bráhman*—‘the Will of Man as it strives upward to the Holy, the Divine’ (‘der zum Heiligen, Götlichen emporstrebende Wille des Menschen’).¹ Deussen is not so blind as to maintain that this is the universal meaning of the word when used filosofically, nor is he so filologically

¹ Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie, 1. 1, p. 241.

foolish as to try to explain away the passages where it does not mean that (*à la Çamkara*) ; but he holds that in such passages the Hindus hav fallen from grace, hav proved untru to the originally lofty concept of the *bráhman*. And this is characteristic of his general interpretation of the Upaniṣads. In so far as they do not fit into his assumption of what their ‘original’ or ‘primary’ doctrin is, he thinks they hav fallen from grace, departed from a previously occupied loftier position.

Now as to *bráhman*, while I should not wish to be forst to define its original meaning, I am certain that it was not ‘der zum Heiligen, Göttlichen emporstrebende Wille des Menschen,’ nor anything remotely suggested by such words. If, in the course of the development of Indian thot, it finally comes to hav a connotation not so very far removed from Deussen’s definition, that can only be a late and secondary development; and it is certainly not (as it seems to me) characteristic of the older Upaniṣads.

And as with the meaning of the individual word *bráhman*, just so it is with the thot of the Upaniṣads as a whole. Deussen finds ‘den eigentlichen Geist der Upaniṣadlehre’ in the Vedāntic Idealism, which he sees fully developt in the oldest Upaniṣads—inclusiv of the doctrin of the unreality of the empiric world (*māyā*), which, he insists, characterizes the oldest and purest form of Upaniṣad teachings.² Of course he recognizes—and sets forth very fully, and with all his customary sharpness of insight and depth of erudition—that it is only comparativly seldom that this ‘Idealism’ is clearly and consistently set forth. But all the passages which ar inconsistent with it—and whose doctrins he pigeonholes under the convenient tags of ‘Pantheism,’ ‘Cosmogonism,’ ‘Theism,’ ‘Atheism,’ and ‘Deism’—all these he regards as degenerations of the original and fundamental idea, or rather instances of falling-away from it, due to the feebleness and frailty of the human intellect, which was frequently unable to hold fast to that lofty summit of idealistic filosofy.

I may say in passing that I cannot agree with Deussen in finding this Vedāntic Idealism, fully developt, at all in the older Upaniṣads. I mean specifically in the Brhad-Āranyaka or the Chāndogya, which ar usually (and without any question rightly) regarded as the oldest. I do not believe that the doctrin of *māyā*—of the unreality of the empiric universe—appears in

² Op. cit. 148 ff., 206 ff.

them at all, except in one or two verses now imbedded in the Br̥had-Āranyaka, which all scholars, including Deussen himself, agree in considering later interpolations. When the Br̥had-Āranyaka and the Chāndogya say that ‘there is really only One that is, in very truth,’ or words to that effect, they do not mean that the Many hav no existence; that was a further step that was taken only later. What they do mean it would take too long to discuss in this paper. It is the less necessary to dwel on this question, whether the *māyā*-doctrin is found in the oldest Upaniṣads, for the reason that it has been fully and ably discust, and to my mind conclusivly decided in the negativ, by Professor Oldenberg, in his latest book.³

Anyhow, this is a digression. What I am now discussing is not whether Deussen is right or wrong as to the exact age of some particular doctrin. It is rather the general point of view which he sets forth, that the Upaniṣads contain fundamentally a System—from which they frequently fall away, to be sure, but which is always more or less present in the background or as a starting-point. Reading Deussen on the Upaniṣads you never ar allowd to forget the doctrin which to him is ‘*der eigentliche Geist der Upaniṣadlehre*’—namely, that the one and only reality is the individual human soul.

Now to my mind there is no such definit doctrin of which it could be said that it is ‘*der eigentliche Geist der Upaniṣaden*.’ The genuin spirit of the Upaniṣads as a whole may be said to express itself in a general tendency—rather an unconscious and blind urging than a settled fact or a deliberate argument—to serch for some one single unitary principle, on the basis of which, in some way or other, the multifariousness of the world as it presents itself to us may be explaind—or at least which may, by its very existence, constitute a sort of bond of union between the individual parts of that multifariousness. But is not this ‘*der eigentliche Geist*’ of almost all filosofy? Genuinely dualistic or pluralistic systems of filosofy ar hard to find; the classical Indian Sāṃkhya may perhaps be regarded as an almost isolated example. To say, then, that the Upaniṣads generally seem to be seeking for a unitary principle of reality, is scarcely more than to say that they ar interested in filosofic problems. And any narroer or more exact definition of the ‘genuin spirit of the

³ *Die Lehre der Upanishaden und die Anfänge des Buddhismus*, 1915 (p. 89 ff.).

Upaniṣads' would fail to describe properly the attitude of the Upaniṣads as a whole. In short, as soon as we ask how the Upaniṣads conceiv this One Principle or Thing, and what its relations ar to the empiric universe, we find the most varied ansers. The Upaniṣads hav no permanent point of view in regard to these questions, but on the contrary ar constantly shifting the viewpoint—constantly reconsidering and attacking from new angles the same old problem. They ar tentativ and experimental, not fixt and final. They ar filosofy in the making. They never seem to feel that they hav found the ultimate truth. Or if they seem momentarily to feel so from time to time, one only needs to read on to the next paragraaf to find that the position assumed with a semblance of satisfaction and finality is given up, and another position, wholly inconsistent with the former, is assumed with regard to the same problem. And this fluidity or fluctuation is the essential thing about them. It is not to be regarded as departure from a norm. There is no norm to depart from.

The names for the One found in the Upaniṣads—which is another way of saying the ways in which the authors try to formulate It and its relation to the world and to themselvs—are numerous. We ar told in all the books—latest of all in Oldenberg⁴—that the two names *bráhman* and *ātmán* ar so predominantly the favorits that other expressions ar negligible in comparison. I cannot find that this is so, at least in the older Upaniṣads. It is true that *bráhman* and *ātmán* ar both common expressions for the One. Perhaps no other single expression is as common as either *bráhman* or *ātmán*. Nevertheless, the idea is exprest in a large variety of other ways, the collectiv number of whose occurrences would perhaps considerably exceed the combined number of occurrences of *bráhman* and *ātmán*. I hav collected no statistics on this point, as yet; I am here stating my own impression merely. But take a single instance—the very famous Sixth Prapāṭhaka of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad—famous perhaps principally because it contains the always-quoted *tat tvam asi* (a frase, by the way, which is often mistranslated, and whose importance I think is overrated).⁵ This is a passage of

⁴ Op. cit., p. 44 ff.

⁵ The entire frase is: *sa ya esa animā, āitadātmyam idam sarvam, tat satyam, sa ātmā, tat tvam asi gvetaketo*, ‘what that subtle essence is, a-state-of-having-that (-animā)-as-its-essence is this universe, that is the Real, that is the Soul (Self, human soul), that (*animā*, subtle essence) ar

some length, and is all about the One, its nature, and its relation to the world and to man. The word *bráhman* does not once occur in its entire length, and tho the word *ātmán* occurs, it can hardly be said to occur as a name for the One. As used in this passage *ātmán* means rather the human soul, simply—the self, in the old original sense of the word. The favorit—and I may fairly say exclusiv—name for the One in this passage is *Sat*—the Existent (also described as *sa anímā*, ‘that subtle essence’).

Much is made of the equation *bráhman* = *ātmán*, interpreted as meaning world-soul = individual soul, and usually said to constitute the corner-stone of Upanisad teachings. Without denying the importance of this equation, I think it should be remembred that an equation of this or any other kind is by no means such a serious and important matter to the Vedic Hindus as it is to us. In the Brähmaṇas, as Deussen says, ‘alles mögliche wird mit allem möglichen gleichgesetzt.’ And this tendency to endless—and usually very shallo—identifications of evrything possible with evrything else possible is quite as prominent in what we call the filosofic passages as anywhere else—from the filosofic hymns of the Atharva Veda, clear thru to the Upaniṣads. In particular, names which ar intended to be applied to the One ar constantly identified with all other known names that had previously been suggested for the same concept. Thus, to mention one erly example, in the Rohita hymn, AV. 13. 2, vs. 39, we ar told—

róhitah káló abhavad róhitó 'gre prajápatih

‘Rohita was Time, Rohita was Prajāpati in the beginning’; and in adjacent verses of this hymn, as in the other Rohita hymns, Rohita—here the Supreme One—is identified with numerous other things and concepts, some filosofical, some not. In short, for a Hindu to say that one thing equals another doesn’t in itself mean much; and as far as the erly Upaniṣads are concernd, I do not find that the equation of *bráhman* with *ātmán* is so common or so pointed as to justify any other inference than that both these words ar familiar expressions for the One—along with many others.

thou, C.’ The frase is frequently represented as meaning ‘thou art (the) That,’ as if *Tat* were itself (as it sometimes is) a name for the One; but here *tat* is simply an ordinary demonstrativ pronoun, referring back to *anímā*.

The fact is, I believe, that no one would have thought of giving this all-surpassing prominence to the *bráhman* and the *ātmán*—as individual expressions—in the older Upaniṣads, at any rate, were it not for the fact that later Hindu philosophy—the Vedānta especially—makes so much of them. Now this fact undoubtedly makes the early history of these two words exceptionally interesting from the point of view of the development of Hindu philosophy as a whole. But if our object is to get an accurate idea of the thought of the *Upaniṣads*, we ought, it seems to me, to invoke the aid mainly of earlier—rather than later—stages of thought, in supplementing and interpreting the Upaniṣads themselves.

Which brings me to my second proposition—that there is scarcely anything in the older Upaniṣads which is not also found—sometimes in a more primitive form—in the philosophic texts of the older Vedic literature. To show how extensively this is true, I am preparing a sort of card-index of the philosophic ideas and expressions in the Vedic *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, and older Upaniṣads. When finished this will, I believe, be a definitive collection of sources for the philosophic ideas of early India. It is already sufficiently advanced that I feel safe in predicting that it will completely establish the truth of my proposition of the close dependence of the Upaniṣads on the older Vedic philosophy. This proposition, if once firmly established, should, it seems to me, have at least one immediate and practical result of prime importance; it should put a definite end to the strange theory advanced by Garbe and accepted by Deussen, that the philosophic thought of the Upaniṣads is a product of the warrior caste and is genetically unrelated to the old ritualistic speculations of the Brahmins. I think my collection will show that there would be as much reason for ascribing *kṣatriya* authorship to many hymns of the Rig and Atharva Vedas, and to many passages in the Yajur Vedas and Brāhmaṇas.

More than this could of course be said against the theory of the *kṣatriya* origin of the Upaniṣads. But perhaps it may seem like slaying the dead to dwell on it further at present, especially in view of the fact that it seems now to be rejected by practically everyone.⁶

Let me then illustrate very briefly how such a complete and comprehensive survey of early Vedic philosophy will illuminate the subject in other ways.

⁶ Most lately by Oldenberg, op. cit., p. 166 ff.

The general plan of the work, in so far as it deals with attempts to get at the concept of the One, wil be this. I shal first enumerate and quote attempts to formulate the One Being *in relation to the empiric world*—with subdivisions such as these: Temporal relations (First, Most Ancient; including in itself Past, Present, and Future; Time itself; concrete units of time, as Year, Day and Night, etc.) ; Spatial relations (Supreme, Highest; Foundation, Support, Bottommost; All-inclusiv, extending beyond all; Boundless, Infinit) ; Causal relations (Causa Efficiens or Creator; Causa Materialis or All-stuff; Uncaused, Unborn, Self-existent, etc.) ; relations as of Rulership (Ruler, Controller, Lord, etc.) ; Theological or Deistic relations (Sole God; Giver of Life, Strength, and other Boons) ; Intellectual relations (Knower of evrything; All-wise; Seer, etc.) ; and finally, the relation of Identity, or Strict Monism (the One *is All*).—Secondly, the collection wil take up the attempts to formulate the One as Absolute *Ding an Sich*—to get at its own nature *in terms of itself*, and not in relation to other things. Here we shal find the subdivisions along such lines as these: Fysical concepts as First Principles (Water, Fire [with Sun, Heat], Wind or Air, Ether—and finally combinations of more than one fysical element as component parts of the universe) ; Psychological or quasi-psychological concepts (Man, *Puruṣa*; Desire; Mind, etc.; *Prāṇa*; and others, leading up to *Ātmán*) ; Ritualistic concepts (Holy Speech, *Vāc*; Br̥haspati; *tapas*; Sacrifice; sacrificial animals and other offerings; *Brahmacārin*, and others, leading up to *Bráhman*) ; Metaphysical and Mystical Concepts (Existant and Non-existent; the One; That (*Tat*) ; *Idam* and *Sarvam*, This, All; *Yakṣa*, ‘Wonder’; Seeret, etc.).

Such, in a very brief and general way, is the plan of my Index of Ideas of Vedic Filosofy. I hav already indicated what I hope wil be the general result of it—a broadening and deepening of the current stock of knowledge of erly Indian filosofy as a whole, and especially a clear and final demonstration of the intimate relation between the Upanisads and their predecessors. I wil close with one concrete instance. In the outline plan here presented I referd to fysical concepts as tentativ First Principles. We saw for instance that of the five later elements, earth, air, fire, water, and ether, all but the first, earth, ar more or less clearly suggested as First Principles in the erly Vedic texts. At least two of these elements, namely wind, or air, and

ether, ar so used in the Upanisads. Thus, Brh U. 3. 7. 6: ‘Wind, in sooth, O Gāutama, is that thred, for by wind as by a thred this world and the other world and all creatures ar knit together.’ Ch U. 1. 8: after a conversation between three Brahmans, in which various Ultimates ar suggested and rejected, the Ether (*ākāṣa*) is declared to be the true Ultimate; (9) ‘for all these beings arise out of the ether and return unto the ether again; for the ether is older than they, and the ether is their final resort (goal).’

In view of such passages—which ar by no means isolated—how can Oldenberg⁷ maintain that ‘none of the powers which tend towards the All-being belongs to the realm of fysical nature’? Oldenberg in this case seems to hav simply accepted the traditional statement, that the great distinction between erly Greek and erly Hindu filosofy is that the Greeks started with fysical elements, and the Hindus never did. Even Deussen, who collects a number of passages from the Upaniṣads in which fysical expressions for the One occur, cannot believ that they ar ment literally, but holds that they ar ‘symbolic’ expressions,⁸ whatever that may mean. I hold—and I think I can prove—that they ar to be understood quite literally, and that they ar precisely analogous to the speculations of the erly Ionic filosofers. It is indeed a curious coincidence that the erliest fysical element to be used in this way is, in both Greece and India, water. In the filosofic hymns of the Rig Veda, already, water is more or less clearly conceivd as the primal principle. It continues to crop out in the same way occasionally thruout the Brāhmaṇa period. By the time of the Upaniṣads, to be sure, it seems to hav been practically eliminated from filosofic discussion. But in Greeee, too, it is only Thales, the first of the Ionic school, who teaches that water is the original element; his successor Anaximander alredy sets up a much more abstract principle, ‘the Infinit.’ And as Anaximenes, the third of the Ionic school, found in Air a more subtle element, and so a more suitable one for use as the first principle, so the Hindus of later times, while not entirely giving up the idea of a fysical element, preferd Air or Wind (*Vāyu*, *Vāta*), or the stil more subtle Ether (*ākāṣa*), to the grosser water.

⁷ Op. cit. p. 45.

⁸ Op. cit. p. 91 ff.